



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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so, that in one family I know well, where there were seven boys, three of them are clergymen and the other four are more religious than the three who are ordained. With regard to Sunday games: it depends on what they are. Charles Kingsley would never allow his boys to play cricket on the village green on Sunday, because he said they could play during the week. I should be much more liberal-minded to boys in the East End than to West End boys. I often tell them there is no harm in their going out for walks or bicycle rides on Sunday afternoons, if they have attended to their religious duties in the morning—for that is the only time they can get fresh air; objecting to that seems to me to be making into a sin what is in reality no sin. This is the principle: you must work out your own details on the Sunday question.

About pocket money: by all means let your boys have some; and let it be in proportion to what he will have to spend in after life. *But*—make him keep an account book. As to whether a boy's debts should be paid when he spends more pocket money than he has got—of course circumstances differ; but if a boy's debts are paid, see that he pays you back the money out of his weekly allowance. A father said to me the other day—"When my boys get into debt, I make it as uncomfortable for them as possible!" That is an excellent rule.

I do not at all take the view that wine should be treated in the same way as playing cards and not prohibited. The more wine is kept away from young boys the better. It does them nothing but harm, unless they are really very delicate. Naturally I see the difficulty that when they get to the University they may take too much; but I do not think you will save them from that by letting them have it as boys. In this connection may I say that letting boys play cards for money is a fatal mistake. It is playing with fire.

I think a form of prayer *should* be given to boys at first, because they do not know what to say. *The Daily Round*, price about 3s. or 4s., is an excellent book of devotion, and let your boy have a prayer card.

THE CHAIRMAN proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the Bishop of Stepney for his lecture, and the proceedings terminated.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.

BY MRS. MAXWELL Y. MAXWELL.

(Continued from page 14.)

It has been said that the music of Mendelssohn is to the music of Wagner as the Grecian architecture is to the Gothic. But however justifiable the simile may be, one can hardly feel that the music of Mendelssohn is quite as limited as the flatness of the Classic roof over one's head: and it might surely be accorded the distance and, perhaps, even some of the mystery of the Gothic roof. Though if we agree to accord this to Mendelssohn, we must—to be relatively fair where Wagner is concerned—take off the roof entirely and stand beneath the infinitude of the sky.

Wagner published a bitter attack upon what he called the "Deleterious effect of the Jews upon music," meaning, we understand, the limitations of Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer. Now respecting Mendelssohn's limitations, it must be remembered that they are to be found in method and form only, while the matter is unlimited, free, and original. His knowledge of counterpoint was quite as great as Wagner's, he could therefore have broken its laws with equal intelligence and daring to suit his own purposes, for assuredly Wagner was not made for counterpoint, but counterpoint for Wagner. But the reason that Mendelssohn confined his musical ideas within recognized modes of expression was because it was his wish to do so, not because he was limited or common-place, but because he had a reverence for musical law. He avows this principle quite clearly enough; but if he had not done so in words his life and character would have spoken it, for his morals as well as his music were kept under control. As a young man he was bursting with spontaneous exuberance, he was sensitive, fascinating, and universally beloved, with a keen capacity for enjoyment such as only the artistic nature possesses. But he held every faculty within the bounds of righteousness.

Full of genius he was also full of discipline, as may be traced from his education and his heredity; for he was the result—first, of his father, a man dominated by judgment of the head; secondly, of his grandfather Moses the philosopher, who was known in his time as the “modern Plato,” and who in his turn was the son of the schoolmaster Mendels, hence the name Mendelssohn. And lastly, Felix was the result of the better portion of his race, inasmuch as he came of the spiritual educated Hebrew, and of a law-abiding ancestry who had preserved their age-long adherence to the commands spoken on Mount Sinai.

While we are ready then to acknowledge that Mendelssohn was strict in the law of musical technique, and even rigid in the symmetry of his phrasing, we can unhesitatingly assert that he was spontaneous when it came to musical matter.

He had numerous disciples, of whom, perhaps, Sterndale Bennett was the chief, though as:

“Moonlight unto sunlight,
And water unto wine.”

These disciples robbed their master of some of his freshness, but this is a thing which may happen to any original genius—whether his work be music, painting, or literature; and after borrowing his brains for years, men will often turn round and complain of his lack of originality.

For example, the portrayal of fairy life in Mendelssohn's overture to the *Midsummer's Night's Dream* was a conception entirely new, and so successful that it has passed into a classic; no composer has treated fairy scenes since without making use of it more or less, in fact, whether they know it or not, rather more. It was dated from Berlin in the August of 1826, that is to say, when its author was seventeen and a half years old, and owing to the originality of thought, freshness of conception, and perfect mastery over the details of construction, it took, at once, a prominent place in the school of modern music. It has been considered by the highest critics that “no one work contains so many new points of harmony and orchestration.” In this overture, as well as in the Octett and Quintett, the fairy lightness and grace are not less remarkable than the strength of construction and solidity of workmanship which underlie and support them.

Its public performance under Mendelssohn's own direction at once raised him from the status of a student to that of a leader of art. One of the many orchestral performances of this work took place at Munich, about four years after it was composed, and resulted in a commission to write a grand opera for the theatre of that music-loving city. This commission, as everyone remembers, was never executed, owing to his high ideal of what a libretto ought to be.

The other parts of the *Midsummer's Night's Dream* music, including the Nocturne, the Entr'acte, and the familiar old Wedding March, were not composed until seventeen years later: this being done by command of the King of Prussia, and the performance at the royal palace drew musicians from Leipzig, Frankfort, and other towns. Sir George Grove says that this music, together with the overture, is “a perfect illustration of Shakespeare's play, and will be loved as long as beauty, sentiment, and exquisite workmanship are held dear.”

Considering the urgency of his friends on the subject, and the lifelong desire on his own part to write a grand opera, it seems as if Mendelssohn might have extended his treatment of this play and taken from it his long sought libretto. In his fruitless search he frequently hovered about Shakespeare, and returned more often than any other to the play of *King Lear*. His very successful music to the first act of *Lorelei* seemed to bear the promise of an opera; but the first act was all he cared for in the book.

Abraham Mendelssohn used to say, when he was desirous that his son should marry: “If Felix is as fastidious in his choice of a wife as he is in his choice of a libretto, he will never marry at all.”

When our musician was staying in Paris his father writes suggesting that he should take the translation of one of the French plays, to which he replies that “the distinctive characteristic of them all is precisely of a nature I should resolutely oppose, although the taste of the present day may demand it.” “I allude,” he adds, “to that of immorality.” He then quotes a scene from *Robert le Diable*, and adds, “if the present epoch exacts this style then I will write nothing but oratorios.”

The production of the small opera, *Camacho's Wedding*, at the Berlin opera-house, when Felix was but nineteen years

old, seems to have been the commencement of years of uncongenial dealings with the coarse Berliners, which amounted at last to a torture, and led to that favourite saying of his that "The first step out of Berlin is the first step to happiness."

The King himself was gracious, considerate, and kindly; but the constraint of Mendelssohn's connection with the Court, and the turmoil and material spirit of Berlin, upset his sensitive nature, and prevented him while thus surrounded, from giving musical form to the melodious conceptions of which his mind was ever full.

For many years his time was spent between the much-hated duties of the Court at Berlin and the delightful direction of the Gewandhaus and Conservatorium at Leipzig; until at last he got quite an attack of Berlin on the brain, and sent in his resignation to the King, which was accepted as far as his personal attendance was concerned, but with the stipulation that he should remain Official Composer to the Court.

It is hardly necessary to say that Mendelssohn's discomfort in his native place existed entirely outside his private circle. The house of his father and mother was ever the dearest place on earth to him; it stood, at that time, beyond the town, enclosed in its own beautiful grounds, as a haven of family love and social charm.

The mansion, which the banker bought when his children were growing up, had previously been the residence of a nobleman, and was large enough to yield up a wing of the building to his sister Fanny and her husband Hensel, for whom there was a spacious studio; besides a glorious hall able to hold six or seven hundred people.

The love of Felix for every member of his family was exceptional, and quite beautiful. One would like to give instances of it if there had been space within the limits of this paper.

For the occasion of his parents' silver-wedding he produced an operetta, *The Son and Stranger*, specially composed for the various capacities of the family circle, every member being obliged to sing a part. That of the painter Hensel, who was appallingly unmusical, was written almost entirely on one note; but even this he was unable to rehearse without sending the other performers into screams of laughter.

We can only now allude to a characteristic feature of Mendelssohn's composition, which must not be overlooked, the production of unaccompanied part songs, a form of music well known in Germany, but unheard in England before his introduction of it. It is not too much to say that the "Open-air part songs" caused a revival of choral music throughout England which is still extending in the form of societies and singing classes in every county; that they created a pleasant social atmosphere, and were to a great extent the power which made the name of Mendelssohn a beloved household word throughout our land.

It was in one of his later visits to London, about three years before his untimely death, that we may see the strain of his overfull life beginning to tell on him. He conducts in Manchester, Birmingham, and other places; he plays the piano in nearly every great house in London; gives organ recitals in St. Paul's Cathedral and various churches; goes to debates at the House of Commons, and to dances, and nothing interferes with his composing, which goes on for a portion of every day. In the midst of this there comes a command from the Court at Berlin to write music to a Greek play; he even executes this and finds it is not required till two years afterwards. That, however, was but characteristic of the official fuss he had to endure; and perhaps it was not, after all, the pleasure and work in London so much as the strangulation by red tape in Berlin which was beginning to affect him, intermittently, but with fatal termination.

He left England and went to join his wife and children for a holiday in Germany, during which he was composing all the time; but this latter was a necessity of his existence, and was the more practicable the further from Berlin he could find himself.

During this holiday he composed many of the movements of his six Organ-sonatas; also his only Concerto for violin and piano, which he wrote without an instrument, for he was rustivating in the mountains. On the night it was first performed at the Leipzig Conservatorium, October, 1845, he was too overstrained to face the public or to bear a sound.

It will be seen that in this attempt to recall Mendelssohn's works there is a conspicuous omission of the *Elijah*, the *Hymn of Praise*, or *St. Paul*; but so popular are these

oratorios that it would seem to be unnecessary, and perhaps impertinent, to attempt any description of them.

Then to pass from the immense to the minute. We must feel that the "Songs without words" have received far too much attention during the last seventy years, and it would be kind to their author to let them alone. We cannot but see that the weakness of some of them is such as would have imperilled the reputation of a less able composer.

It is, however, quite reassuring to find that Mendelssohn despised the popularity which resulted from these productions; indeed he kept back many of them from publication during his lifetime, saying that "such animalculæ must not be multiplied too much."

He used to say, "I do not in the least regard what people wish, or praise, or pay for."

It is perhaps well for the interests of art that the artist should not always be a starving man. If his butcher had been pressing for payment, Mendelssohn might have been tempted to give the public what they wanted instead of what he thought would be good for them, he might have given them musical sugar-sticks instead of the vigorous diet of Bach, or written the much requested opera to a libretto of which he did not approve rather than his oratorios, the words of which were taken from *The Book* he loved and held in highest esteem.

But the circumstances of our composer were quite scandalously comfortable! and hence a problem, how to reconcile the fact that he was a genius—we must allow no two opinions about that—with the assurance that he had always a good account at his banker's; that he was quite lacking in fits of gloomy depression; that nobody in his father's house misunderstood or underrated him; and then, most untraditional of all, he possessed a sweet and clever wife who not only was worthy of him but whose worthiness he was ready to acknowledge! In spite of this last most serious defect in a man laying claim to be a genius, he gained a reputation as great in its way as that of Socrates, Andrea del Sarto, or the saintly John Wesley, each of whom was certainly not saddled with that disadvantage.

Then there was the defect of riches which he overcame without difficulty; for if poverty be regarded as a spur to production, it was quite unnecessary to his genius.

Mendelssohn was possessed by an untiring industry, which was indeed so great as to amount to a calamity, seeing how the art of taking rest was almost the only art of which he was ignorant, and the lack of it induced his hereditary brain collapse. The production of great works for the good of society is an arduous labour requiring self-discipline and self-sacrifice, and for the accomplishment of it some degree of financial neediness on the part of the artist is often an advantage.

When Mendelssohn and Chopin were in Paris together, the latter much desired to accompany his friend on a travelling tour, but his purse was empty. He requested that the journey might be delayed a day, and returned to his lodging; he scribbled hard all night, ran to the publishers in the morning, and met Mendelssohn at the coach with 500 francs in his pocket. This is how we obtained Chopin's lovely Waltz in E flat. Whether starvation is an inducement to the growth of genius or not, we have proof in Mendelssohn that it is not always indispensable.

The third defect attending his career was his happiness and the social sympathy by which he was always surrounded, the abundance of admiration which met him in all places. Devrient well explains how this kind of success had no injurious effect on his friend, for "Felix was so strong," says he, "in mind and character, that he never once let slip the bridle of religious discipline, nor the just sense of modesty and humility. Heaven granted him the fulfilment of all his wishes, and earth denied him none of her joys." And if heaven and earth had not behaved in this satisfactory manner, Mendelssohn's was hardly the nature to fret against the fact; he had so entirely the talent for happiness, that it seemed his parents must have been prophetic when they chose for him the name of Felix. This absence in his life of great personal sorrow is felt in his works, and although he is able to represent sorrow when necessary, that ability seems merely due to his dramatic power—as in the case of the prophet Elijah when he sings—"It is enough, now take away my life."

Schubert used to say of his own music that it was the product of his genius and his distress, and that the public liked those things best which he had composed in his sorest

troubles. And in the case of Beethoven, no doubt it was the grief and desolation in his life that created those great pangs in his music which shake one's soul to the bottom.

But we cannot combine all qualities in the same composer, and for once we must forego the enjoyment of being made so magnificently miserable in consideration of the exquisite melody, the refined workmanship, and the masterly grace of Mendelssohn. Perhaps, indeed, it is beneficial for us, whether we like it or not, to leave for a little the latest disciples of Wagner and the clever, brilliant madness of the modern Polish school; and return to the sanity, the calmness, and the gentle strength of our Felix.

We look in at the open door of a church in Leipzig which has witnessed one of the most musical and most demonstrative public funerals which Germany has ever given, and after the church has emptied itself of its great black throng, the young widow kneels beside the coffin before it is taken to the train for Berlin. Not in uncontrolled lamentations for herself, but in calm prayer for strength to do her duty, and care for the five children who are left to her. To Devrient, who came to fetch her away, she said, "God will help me, and surely my boys will have the inheritance of some of their father's goodness."

And he to whom she spoke, who had loved Mendelssohn since he was a little boy, could think of no more fitting memorial of his friend than the well-balanced, strong, and tender heart of the wife he had left behind him.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE SCHOOL.

BY G. F. BRIDGE, ESQ.

THE late Bishop of London in addressing an educational meeting some time ago, spoke of boarding schools as being "half barracks, half workhouse, places to which parents send their sons in order to get rid of them." In considering this utterance, we ought, no doubt, to make allowance for that spirit of mild jocularly which Bishops so often see fit to import into their episcopal utterances; but, nevertheless, it points to a real danger. There is, I believe, a legend of a machine at Chicago, into one end of which the workman drops pigs and from the other end of which emerge sausages. So possibly some parents, and perchance some schoolmasters, think that you have only to drop a child into the bottom of a school, and in due time a fully educated man, perfectly developed in all his faculties, bodily and mental, will emerge from the top.

Coleridge, in his autobiography, tells us that when he went to Christ's Hospital, the master said to him:—"Boy, the school is your father! the school is your mother! the school is your brother, your sister, your first cousin, your second cousin, and all the rest of your relations! Let's have no more crying."

Yet it is quite certain that the school cannot in this way perform its own functions and the functions of the home too. The school is the realm of law and discipline, the home of affection and freedom, and the boy—and for that matter every human being—needs the latter no less than the former. School life cultivates mainly the masculine virtues of obedience to law, courage, industry, public spirit, self-reliance; the home the more feminine virtues of gentleness, pity for the weak, purity and tender feeling. The man needs the feminine virtues as much as the masculine, the woman needs the masculine as much as the feminine. Boys brought up altogether in schools would be barbarians, boys brought up altogether in homes would be weaklings. The school and the home are the corrective the one of the other. It is good, no doubt, to remember Wellington's saying (if he *did* say it) that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton; but it is good also to remember that while every citizen ought to be able to fight if the needs of his country